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NT 520 Introduction to the New Testament

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NT 520
NEW TESTAMENT FOUNDATIONS
SPRING 2001
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is intended to help you begin to weave yourself through the maze of NT studies. During the course we will be exploring several major subject areas: 1) the history of the period in which the NT was written; 2) the social and cultural milieu in which early Christians lived; 3) the practice of the scholarly study of the NT (source, form, redaction, genre, rhetorical criticism et al.); 4) questions of introduction about the books of the NT (authorship, date, audience, structure, purpose); 5) the practice of exegesis and hermeneutics. In terms of the cognitive content of this course there are two major components: 1) the lectures; 2) the textbooks.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In this course I intend to introduce you to the major areas of New Testament study: 1) the history, archaeology, and social milieu of the period in which the NT was written; 2) the practice of NT criticism; 3) Questions of introduction about NT documents (authorship, date, audience, structure); 4) exegesis and hermeneutics.

In this course I expect for you to: 1) begin to develop competence in reading the literature on the NT, and using basic commentaries and tools; 2) begin to explore the different areas and disciplines and aspects of NT studies; 3) learn how to do basic research and writing in NT studies; 4) begin to gain an understanding of the crucial nature of studying Biblical texts in their original contexts; 5) begin to understand and develop skills in basic exegesis and hermeneutics so that sermons, teaching lessons, counseling material can be prepared.

The student who successfully completes this course and masters its material will be well prepared to enter NT 550-- Exegesis of Selected Passages and BT606-- Biblical Theology.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be two tests, a mid-term and a final exam. These will be take home tests, but they will not be open book or open note tests. They will be open brain tests! You will however be able to use your Bibles (just don't copy all your class notes into your Bible!). You will be allowed to take whatever time you want on these tests during the week in which the test is given (i.e. you will have a one week opportunity to see the test on the web page and take it). The mid-term exam will cover the first half of the course and the final will cover the latter half.

There will be a term paper of no more than ten pages of text (plus notes and bibliography) on some subject related to the five areas covered in the course as listed above. Sample term papers are available in the library. I will expect you to follow one of the following standard formats for such papers-- APA style, MLA style sheet, Turabian. This paper is due the last Friday of March. You should be prepared to use eight to ten good sources for your paper. The Bible and Webster's dictionary do not constitute sources. Resources listed in your text books as primary and secondary sources do. I would recommend your using 2-3 good articles and 4-5

good commentaries or NT monographs.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

1) J. Drane, Introducing the New Testament, San Francisco: Harpers, 1990, (pb). An excellent readable basic introduction. If this is too simple for you, you may want to try R.P. Martin's two volume work New Testament Foundations.

2) L. MacDonald and S. Porter, Early Christianity and its Sacred Literature, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000).

Though I am not requiring it, if you really want to understand the 'values' of the first century world, read B. Malina's The New Testament World, 2nd ed.

3) J.B. Green et. al. eds The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Downers Grove: I-V Press, 1993 (hb)

4) G.F Hawthorne et al. eds. The Dictionary of Paul and his Letters, Downers Grove: I-V Press, 1993 (hb). These two dictionaries are excellent reference tools. If you already have these and are looking for more detail try the Anchor Bible Dictionary (multiple volumes). The latter is done by authors that range from conservative to liberal, while the I-V dictionaries are done by Evangelicals.

READING SCHEDULE

It is very important that you keep up with the reading schedule. In fact I would encourage you to start early and get ahead. The course is basically divided into five parts (see the course description above), but we are parcelling the reading out over the first three parts of the course, giving you some leeway and catchup time at the end.

For the NT history, archaeology, social milieu portion of the course which comes first please read all of Drane as a general introduction. You may read more selectively if you wish to also read Malina, which is more focused on the social world issues.

For the NT criticism portion of the course you should also make a start on some of the following articles in The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: 1) form criticism; 2) Gospels (genre); 3) Gospels (historical reliability); 4) Historical Jesus, Quest; 5) Jesus in non-Christian sources; 6) L Tradition; 7) Languages of Palestine; 8) Literary criticism; 9) M tradition; 10) Myth; 11) narrative exegesis; 12) Q; 13) redaction criticism; 14) rhetorical criticism; 15) Sociological approaches to the Gospels; 16) Synoptic Problem; 17) Synoptics and John; 18) Textual criticism.

For the third portion of the course in addition to finishing the above articles you should read in The Dictionary of Paul and his Letters: 1) Apocalypticism; 2) authority; 3) Chronology of Paul; 4) Hermeneutics; 5) Letter forms; 6) Old Testament in Paul; 7) Paul and his Interpreters; 8) Paul in Acts and Letters; 9) Paul in early church tradition; 10) Rhetorical criticism; 11) Social scientific approaches to Paul; 12) Textual Criticism.

For the fourth portion of the course, all articles on individual Gospels and Letters in the two dictionaries should be read (e.g. John, Gospel of; Romans, letter to).

NOTE: I will be asking on the two exams how much of the required reading you have

done. This will effect borderline grades (pushing them up or down).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Weeks 1-3: Lectures 1-8 will be on history, archaeology, the social world

Weeks 3-8: Lectures 9-25 will be on NT criticism

Weeks 9-11: Lectures 26-34 will be on NT Introduction

Weeks 12-13: Lectures 35-39 will be on exegesis and hermeneutics

The professor will be away a couple of times during the term, but the class will always be held, being conducted by Virtual Ben.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

At about week 9 the midterm will be given (stay tuned for more precise information). The term paper will be due the last Friday of March, and the final exam will be posted the last day of class.

WEB MANIA

There are a wide and wild variety of websites that you may find helpful for Biblical studies: 1) <http://www.luthersem.edu/learnnet/biblepro/bible.htm>; 2) if you want to test your Bible knowledge try <http://www.spectra.net/~diana/webt2.htm>; 3) <http://www.americanbible.org>; 4) <http://www.gospelcom.net/ccmag/mags.html>; 5) <http://scholar.cc.emory.edu/scripts/highplaces.html>.

If you are looking for a major league search engine try: 1) <http://ww.findspot.com/>; or 2) <http://argos.evansville.edu/>.